



Fact Sheet

SC Department of Health and Environmental Control • 2600 Bull Street • www.scdhec.net • Promoting and protecting the health of the public and the environment.

Oral Health Services for Individuals with Special Needs

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration has defined children and adolescents with special health care needs as those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional condition and who require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.

Conditions that may lead to special health care needs include:

- Down's syndrome
- Cleft lip/palate and other craniofacial defects
- Cerebral palsy
- Learning and developmental disabilities
- Emotional disturbances
- Vision and hearing impairments
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Genetic and hereditary disorders with orofacial defects
- HIV infection



Oral Health Status

The oral health of children and adults with special health care needs may be affected negatively by medications, therapies or special diets they require or by their difficulty cleaning their teeth.

Often parents may not be comfortable performing oral hygiene care for their child.

In addition, many conditions and disabilities are associated with increased risk for various oral health problems.

Access to Care

The Americans with Disabilities Act (P.L. 101-336) requires dental offices to serve persons with disabilities and that dentists make reasonable modifications to facilitate access.

Pediatric dentists are taught how to provide care for individuals with special health care needs, but there is a need for more dentists who can and will treat the increasing numbers of these children and adolescents.

Results of the 1994-1995 National Health Interview Survey on access to care and use of services by children with special health care needs indicate that the most prevalent unmet need is *dental care*.